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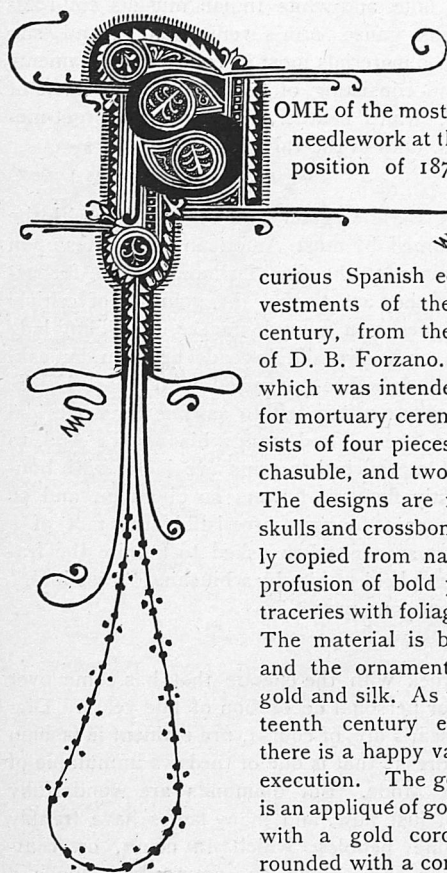
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ART NEEDLEWORK

SPANISH MORTUARY VESTMENTS.



ONE of the most remarkable needlework at the Paris Exposition of 1878 was that done upon some curious Spanish ecclesiastical vestments of the sixteenth century, from the collection of D. B. Forzano. This set, which was intended specially for mortuary ceremonies, consists of four pieces, a cope, a chasuble, and two dalmatics. The designs are made up of skulls and crossbones, evidently copied from nature, and a profusion of bold yet graceful traceries with foliage and fruit. The material is black velvet and the ornamentation is in gold and silk. As with all sixteenth century embroideries there is a happy variety in the execution. The general work is an appliqué of gold, attached with a gold cord and surrounded with a cord of silk of varying shades. The subjects

in the centre are embroidered in gold couching attached with silk, and, by a happy contrast, the cartouches are couched in silk and attached with metal. The traceries are in gold appliqué and the foliage and fruits in silk couching attached with gold. Our illustrations show the front and back of the cope and of one of the dalmatics, together with an enlarged view of the main design on the latter. The reader interested in such work should not overlook the beautifully ornamented collar which is said to be a feature peculiar to the Spanish dalmatic.

EMBROIDERY FOR BEDROOMS.

I.

GOING back to the study of sixteenth-century needlework for the decoration of bedrooms, we are struck at the outset with astonishment, and I might almost say with discouragement. The specimens of embroidery on linen are as varied as they are intricate. Our feeble attempts at modern art work pale before them, and we ask ourselves if in this busy latter-day life any mere bit of needlecraft be worth the time and care indispensable to such an achievement. Take, for instance, a quilt bearing those characteristic adornments of black-silk stitchery introduced into England by Katherine of Aragon. Here is a curling mass of leaves, and grapes, and tendrils, enriched with silver spangles and with black beads. Old satin stitch is used to fill in the tiny grapes, alternating with eyelet-holes, with French knots, with spider-webs of fine thread. The main body of the work is done in white thread, the shapes outlined in fine black silk, the silver and beads afterward added. Then there are bed-curtains of the same period, showing the same Spanish influence, made of coarse linen covered with traceries in crumb stitching of black silk that might be line engraving, or what we, in modern days, mistakenly call "etching" upon linen.

Look also at the Italian sixteenth-century work, where quaintly graceful fancies are wrought out with infinite sentiment into enduring forms of beauty. A bed-cover of that time has lovely branching scrolls of gold thread on linen, each scroll framing or terminating in a flower worked in soft-hued silks; carnation and strawberry, fruit and blossom, thistle and tender columbine, rose and myrtle are there intertwined. No evidence of haste or slighted work is to be found upon it after microscopic examination. Later on, the same linen grounds show the triumphal bursting into blossom of the Italian Renaissance. Flowers bloom even more luxuriantly, and scrolls are outlined upon a background of silver laid-work like a trellis.

Portuguese needlework on linen has for several centuries exhibited the gold silk stitchery of which I have examined several antique specimens in New York. Fabled animals of every variety, myths that have taken grotesque shape, and chapters of national history are severally worked in a sort of fine backstitch upon immense squares of stuff, and a lining afterward added, consisting of sundry bits of gay-hued calico joined together like children's patchwork. The general effect of these Portuguese embroideries is as if they were dipped in sunshine.

In Holland, quilts were made of linen worked in crewels with birds and flowers; and in some German work of the seventeenth century a linen spread, probably meant to throw over bed, pillows and all, is quaintly embroidered in pale pink thread.

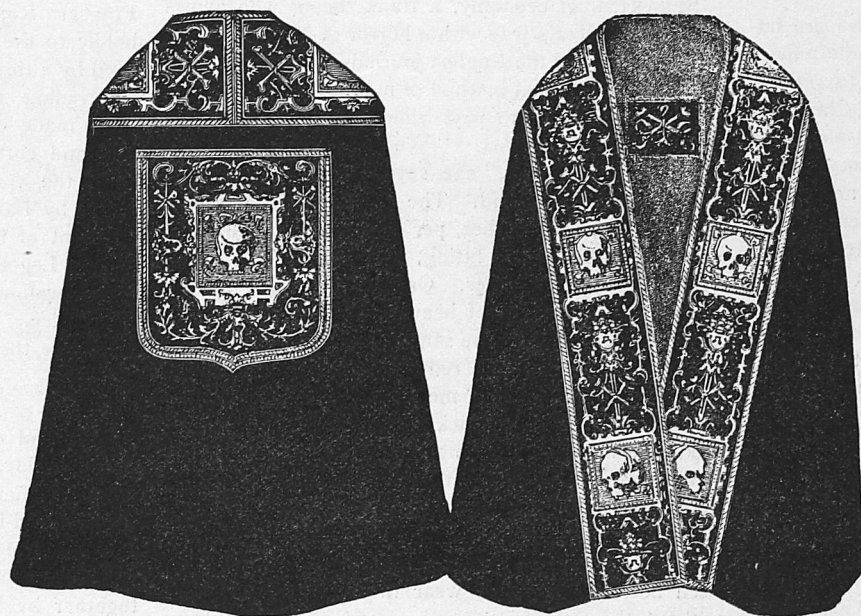
During Queen Elizabeth's time England was rich in embroideries of crewel work on linen. A beautiful quilt of that period, now proudly treasured by the family who have always owned it, is worked in finest

Tambour work was a pretty, dainty, old-time method of embroidery. I dare say many American families have in their possession pieces of linen dating from colonial days, and sprigged with violets and rosebuds, which have come down to them in due course from loving mother to reverent child. Chain-stitch wrought by machine, now so commonly seen in the garish embroideries piled on shop-counters, has vulgarized the art of tambour-work, which it closely resembles. Perhaps in another year or two, wearying for a new-old handicraft, we may be hunting in the garrets of our homes for the small round frames fitting one within another, and the hooks designed for tambour-work. And surely nothing more fine and lady-like can be devised for the decoration of bedroom draperies than this forgotten art.

Outline work in silks upon linen and cotton textiles appears to have been anciently used in many countries of Europe, as well as in China, Persia, Turkey, and Egypt. This is no doubt, of all ancient embroidery stitches, the one most readily adaptable to the decoration of cotton stuffs. Numbers of beautiful old patterns may be used for the purpose, and to follow an outline in even stem-stitch does not require extraordinary skill or pains. Crash, sewn together in lengths, or Bolton sheeting, makes the best ground for the work, although many experienced workers use a fine linen sheet where a bed-cover is required, and the same linen for curtains.

We are fortunate in being able to secure at a comparatively inexpensive rate so lovely a textile for this class of embroidery as Bolton sheeting. Most readers of THE ART AMATEUR are doubtless acquainted with the fact that it was known long years ago in England, and that in the reign of Charles II. crewel embroidery in many colors was applied to the soft creamy surface with good effect. Strange to say, the familiar emblem of New England plenty, the pumpkin, with its golden disk and large clustering leaves, was chosen as a favorite design by seventeenth-century embroiderers in England. A hanging of that period recently exhibited at South Kensington bore a device called by an American lady who visited it, "a beati-fied squash-vine running over everything, which made me feel quite homesick."

One more suggestion of ancient art for modern purposes and we shall have summed up enough of them for present needs. I allude to "Queen Anne work," or darned work, where large outlined patterns are left in a sort of relief upon the surface, by means of darning in close parallel rows of silk or crewel across the entire ground. For bed hangings and drapery this method is especially elegant. Most of us who took heed of such things at the Centennial Exhibition at Philadelphia saw



SPANISH COPE OF THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY.

in the Woman's Pavilion there a sumptuous bed-hanging designed by Morris for Hon. Mrs. Percy Wyndham, where a species of darning stitches, or laid work, in blue silk, covered the ground of cream-tinted stuff, leaving the pattern in relief. Bolton sheeting, or even unbleached muslin, may be so decorated with threads of crewel as to convey a very pleasing effect. The worker who undertakes to fit up her own or her spare bedroom with such embroidery must bring a fair amount of patience to the task, but otherwise there is no great strain upon her endurance, for the work goes easily and the result is charming. A set of curtains and a quilt or coverlet of darned-in crewel work on Bolton sheeting, would last and be cleaned, and finally be handed down to one's grandchildren rather improved than the reverse by wear and washing.

Of drawn linen work in all countries, much that is interesting and curious might be said. This fascinating method of decoration was in universal use in Europe, and in certain countries of the East many centuries ago. In Mexico, in our Southern States, and in many parts of South America, drawn work is still done after the most ancient methods known to needlewomen. Italian "punto tirato" and Spanish "deshilado" formed in olden times the most gorgeous decoration faithful hearts and patient fingers could devise for the drapery of their altars, as well as for the robes of state and burial garments of their kings. Allied with embroidery, drawn work is to-day revived in fashionable art schools for adorning bed linen, towels, table-covers, and buffet-covers; and I can suggest no decorative craft more rich in immediate return to a student.

In the paper following this it is my design to treat of various methods by which the foregoing suggestions may be applied in detail to modern needs and materials.

So much eloquence has been bestowed upon the fittings of drawing-room and boudoir by teachers of decorative needlework, that it seems high time the bed-room should have its share of attention, especially as the class of embroidery mentioned here is in all respects most appropriate to the upper regions of our homes.

CONSTANCE CARY HARRISON.

ARTISTIC NEEDLEWORK IN NEW YORK.

THE embroidery studio recently established by Mr. John Lafarge, the well-known decorative artist, has been placed under the charge of Miss Tillinghast, and an unusual quantity of notable work is now in progress therein. In this there is observable a marked tendency toward naturalistic expression, restrained nevertheless within certain limits, which seem to be prescribed by artistic feeling, rather than by any formal artistic principles. Two small curtains, embroidered on a changing Japanese silk, whose ground is further broken by a brocaded design, illustrate this. One shows apple boughs hanging downward and meeting, laden with rosy apples, and, below, a grassy foreground. In the other a spring-like effect is given with branches in blossom, and pink petals fluttering down to the green beneath. In these the realistic suggestion is conveyed thoroughly to the mind, yet the effect is far from approaching the extreme which carried Mrs. O. W. Holmes's embroidery beyond the bounds of legitimate decoration.

In a handsome screen now being prepared in imitation of old Spanish tapestry the design of the centre panel is rose sprays on ruby plush, and of the two side panels snowballs and a kindred flower, with the simulated grass beneath. In these the color is conventional. Artistic shades of antique pink compose the roses, which are outlined, as is the foliage, with gold thread. But the drawing is from nature, the sprays following with exquisite grace the wayward growth of the natural forms.

The preparing of designs seems to occupy in this studio the greater part of the time necessary for a completed work. In illustration of this may be mentioned some designs which are to be executed in imitation of old Italian tapestries. One of these shows a wood nymph with drapery of leaves. For the figure a number of poses have been photographed. From these the desired pose is selected and drawn on a cartoon of the required size. Branches are photographed in the same way and free-hand drawings made from them. When the cartoon is finished to the satisfaction of the artist, a smaller copy is made in color, and the color scheme is elaborated with equal care. In preparing two such working models there is necessarily much choice and deliberation, and frequent change. Mr. Lafarge intends his embroideries to take the direction of effects of tapestry rather than of work in appliqué.

Besides the work mentioned some superb portières are in preparation here for one of the luxurious homes now in process of erection on Fifth Avenue. One of them, on a magnificent fabric called silver cloth, is spanned with a rich garland with decorative ribbons floating on each side. The ornament is in conventional colors, the ribbons blue, and both in color and design it recalls the elegant elaboration of Renaissance decoration, and might have been taken from some old Florentine frieze. The silver cloth is to be treated slightly with gold to break up the surface. Surrounding this is a border of appliqué on a purplish ground. On another curtain a whole series of designs will appear. The upper one represents Jupiter sending

forth Mercury, the group being inclosed in the circle of the Zodiac. On one side sits Juno, in her chariot drawn by peacocks and attended by a cupid, and on the other Venus, drawn by doves and similarly accompanied. Another design represents a messenger standing in a Grecian portico, about to enter, and within the banqueting hall appears, with servants bearing the feast. The purpose of this curtain is to represent hospitality, and so far only these two designs have been worked out. Such a brief description can give no idea of the attention given to the details and the care and study

caught with green silk, and gleams of red show in the under lining. Here and there bits of blue are introduced in clusters of filoselle. Above this hangs a border of light blue silk, uncut and traversed with a fret pattern in gilt, which is led down into the more sober hues of the curtain by bands of silver and brown filoselle.

The second portière exhibits that decorative treatment which so far is peculiar to Mr. Lafarge, and can only be characterized as a Japanese conception realized by western methods. That is to say, it is a landscape effect neither realistic nor conventionalized, and expressed in appliqué embroidery and by a treatment which recalls Mrs. Holmes's work, but which is adapted to every-day use. The design, which divides into two curtains, is a foreground with luxurious peony growths, a tree spreading its foliage overhead, and sky between, on one side, and on the other a larger glimpse of sky, over which birds pass in full flight. In the cartoons the drawing of these is delightful. The whole surface will be overwrought, blue silk and silver brocades furnishing the sky, and into these the embroidery will run over, bringing the curtains together in effect. The embroidery, where detail is required, will be elaborate; in the masses of foliage it will be less definite, returning to precision at the ends of the leaf branches.

EMBROIDERY NOTES.

THE Woman's Exchange exhibits a handsome blue satin fire-screen on which is embroidered a rose-spray—leaves, buds, and half-opened rose. The work is executed in rather coarse silks in satin stitch, and is made very effective by the bold coloring. The leaves are carefully shaded and varied, and the roses are in bright-dark reds, which must not be considered as a contradiction of adjectives. The border of blue plush is made to appear like the mat of a picture, not being sewed on but covering a piece of stiff buckram which raises the edge. The whole is swung in an ebonized wood frame.

The blackberry furnishes some of the most artistic of the season's designs. Its wayward growth adapts it to many uses, and its coloring, taken at whatever season, is always attractive. On a toilet set displaying a decoration of embroidery the blackberry spray was allowed to show foliage, flowers, and fruit. The leaves and flowers were embroidered in silks. The shading of the leaves was exceedingly fine, as much brightness as is allowable being thrown into them, and against these was contrasted the richness of the berries. These were wrought in French knot-stitch with two shades of dark-red arrasene. On the bottles which accompanied the set the more tender leaves and buds were used.

It is urged again and again in decorative embroidery that, for amateurs, it is much safer to adhere to conventionalized designs than to attempt the imitation of natural flowers. Without attempting to give other reasons in favor of this style of decoration, it is sufficient to say that for amateurs the work is more satisfactory, as it

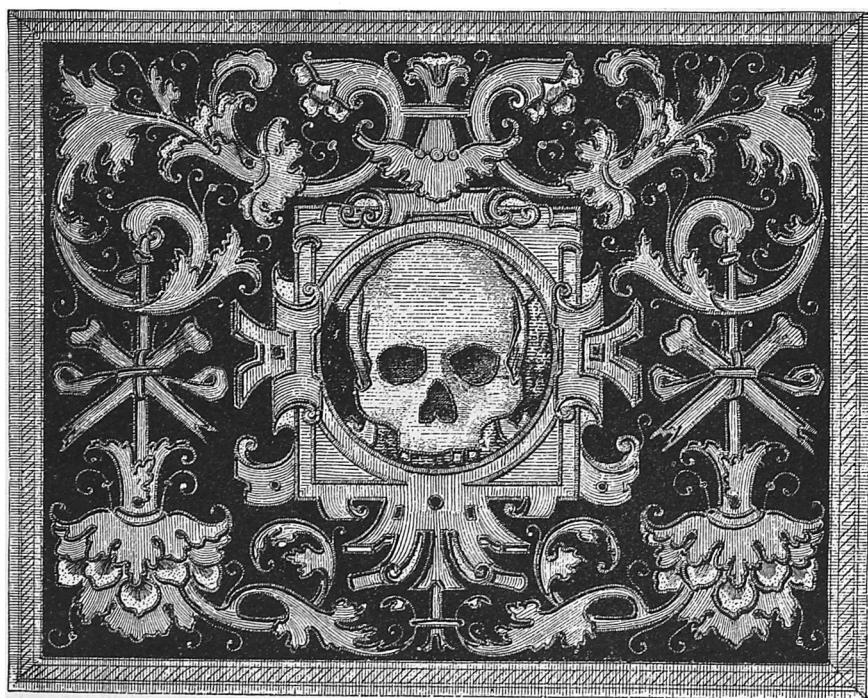
only demands the repetition of a certain scheme of colors at regular intervals. A mantel lambrequin with such a design may be described. The material in this case was dark garnet plush. The decoration was a continuous floral design in large lines. The motive was taken from some one of the lily species, but was highly conventionalized. The foliage was in gray silks shading into browns, the flower of blue silk with grays and browns forming a large calyx. Each part was outlined with the tinsel thread, now so greatly used.



SPANISH DALMATIC OF THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY.

devoted to the drawings, which must be first considered before any thought is directed to the working out of the design in color. This curtain is to be executed altogether in embroidery and will be, when finished, one of those luxurious works of art which can only be produced when a prosperous era allows wealth to be directed toward such æsthetic purposes.

Two portières recently designed exhibit Mr. Lafarge's treatment of Japanese motives. The first is simply a rendering of Japanese stuffs, intended for a Japa-



DESIGN FROM A SPANISH DALMATIC OF THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY.

nese room. The curtain, which is parted in the middle, is of a rich, deep blue stuff, divided crosswise by gold lines and checkered in squares, each of which contains a small design in color. On this there is no further decoration except at the outer edges, where a border is indicated by an arrangement of stuffs making at intervals large bows. Here is where the painter's art comes in, although expressed simply in the stuffs. This decoration is made of a brownish gold satin with a dim blue brocaded Japanese silk. In the bows these are